

CONSCIOUS COACHING FIELD GUIDE

TURNING BUY-IN INTO ACTION



BRETT BARTHOLOMEW

CONSCIOUS COACHING FIELD GUIDE

TURNING BUY-IN INTO ACTION

Brett Bartholomew

Copyright © 2017 Brett Bartholomew

All rights reserved.

“Be practical as well as generous in your ideals. Keep your eyes on the stars, but remember to keep your feet on the ground.”

– U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt

For strength and conditioning coaches, Teddy Roosevelt’s message still resonates today: Theory is great, but nothing beats applied strategy.

So, this field guide gives you practical ways to put key strategies and principles in *Conscious Coaching* to use in the real world. The aim is to help you become a more well-rounded coach who’s better equipped to deal with not only the physics involved in training but also the *social physics* inherent to our vocation.

Lead better, communicate better

In our never-ending quest to be better informed in order to predict outcomes, we’ve forgotten something important: coaching interactions are dynamic, and power always plays a role, so outcomes can never be fully anticipated and are instead constantly negotiated (Jones 2006).

In the “information age,” we know more than ever before about the world, but in many ways it has also become less predictable. That’s because data is only one part of the equation when it comes to knowledge transfer and craftsmanship. Coaches are not lacking in theory or studies, but rather application and understanding.

We have heard the voices and frustrations of countless coaches who want to become better leaders and communicators.

Understand people, not just exercises

For too long there was a push to enhance movement quality and efficiency while neglecting to do the same for coaching strategies and communication.

There should be no argument about which is most important: improving our athletes’ movement, and improving our own strategies and communication both hold the same critical importance in what we do.

In fast-paced, pressure-packed high-performance environments, fluctuating agendas and attitudes can dramatically impact the task-based outcomes and relational outcomes we are trying to achieve. It is within this sociopolitical context we learn that understanding people can prove to be far more challenging than understanding exercises. Yet you can find ample resources if you want to learn about weightlifting movements or other technical aspects of training such as speed and agility, but few that can help you learn adaptive coaching strategies.

This guide is another contribution on my part to help you add more coaching weapons to your arsenal. By developing effective strategies for interacting with others, you and your colleagues can bridge the gap with every high performer you support.

ACTIVITIES

The activities below have been designed to help you and your colleagues hone your abilities to effectively navigate the highly interactional playing field you, your athletes, and members of your organization face daily. As with the information in *Conscious Coaching*, the activities are not useful just for coaches, but for leaders in any realm who are looking to improve themselves in communication or conflict management.

They can be adapted in any manner that you like, and you can pick and choose those that are most relevant to the issues you currently face or the abilities you or members of your staff need to improve. These activities are going to be uncomfortable for some, and require creativity, vulnerability, and the ability to improvise on the spot. Such is the nature of the world of coaching. Successful interaction in these activities – and in situations you’ll experience throughout life – will depend on your ability to fully engage no matter how “foolish” you may feel in the moment. Play the long game, and don’t let pride or ego corrode an opportunity for improvement.

Each activity has been divided into: an overview; the application, which includes instructions on how to do the activity; and some guiding insights in a “helping hand” note at the end.

Activity 1: The Time Traveler

Suitable for: A pair or a group

Overview

In Chapter 1 of *Conscious Coaching*, I discuss two distinct components of communication: *content* and *relation*. *Content* can be thought of as the information that we transmit to our athletes about technique and tactics, such as the fact that when you cut or change direction it’s important to

maintain a low center of gravity, or the proper setup and execution of a weightlifting movement such as a clean or a snatch.

The *relation* element of communication is more about the *way* in which people exchange information. Speak in the way that best connects with your athletes, and you will more persuasively deliver the information you need to convey.

Think of it like learning a new language before an overseas trip so that you can better navigate a foreign country and speak more effectively with the people you meet. Not all athletes will share your interests, and many of them certainly will not share your domain-specific knowledge of physiology, biomechanics, motor learning, and the like. You need to speak their language and get on their level, without dumbing it down so much that you risk alienating them.

You may believe this should come naturally to you, because as a coach, you likely spend the majority of your days interacting with others. I'd urge you to reconsider. If effective communication came naturally to all of us, there would be no reason for the continued study of sociology, behavioral economics, and psychology, and there would be no need for all the therapists who mediate between and counsel millions of people around the world.

Relation-based communication strategies include using analogies or metaphors such as "Push the ground away from you when you jump," as opposed to being overly technical and fixating on joint angles or kinematics. For youth athletes, you might give exercises fun names based on their favorite animal – for example, frog jump instead of broad jump. This helps them form more of a personal and emotional attachment to the exercise, because they are now visualizing something they think is cool or unique to them. Don't underestimate the power of small changes like these.

Learning to speak your athletes' language is not the same as catering to them. It is about being respectful of their world view and helping them feel more like a part of the process, as opposed to a piece of it.

Application

- 1) Write a list of items or concepts we are extremely familiar with today that would be unfamiliar, and perhaps even alarmingly alien, to someone 500 years ago – for example, wireless headphones, airplanes, text messaging, the internet. The group's leader can write the list or ask for suggestions from the group.
- 2) Once you have several items on your list, have the group break up into pairs.
- 3) Partner A chooses an item from the list and tries to explain it to Partner B, who takes on the role of a person from 500 years ago. As Partner A travels back in time to explain this modern-day invention, they need to be mindful of the words they use. They will likely default to terms that are familiar to us now but would have been alien to someone 500 years ago. Partner B must be fully committed to their role and be truthful about the reactions someone 500 years would have when hearing certain terms and descriptions.
- 4) The partners switch roles, and the person who is now Partner A chooses a different item from the list. Then the pair repeats the exercise.

Note: This isn't charades. Partner A is *not* trying to get Partner B to guess a word. The aim is to help Partner B understand a concept to which they have had no previous exposure.

Variation

To make this even more difficult, you can set a timer restricting the participants to anywhere from 30 seconds to 5 minutes to explain their item. A shorter time frame provides more of a real-world experience for coaches, as all of us have time constraints on our training sessions.

Helping Hand

Quit trying to tell people everything you know. A more effective approach is to ask them about what they know. Learning about their world will help you modify your approach and provide more opportunities for you to reframe and relate a concept to help them better understand.

Don't worry about "winning" here. Success in this activity is about unearthing the modes of communication we tend to default to when teaching others. You may find you tend to use overly complex terms, repeat yourself, become increasingly agitated or frustrated, or rely solely upon facts and information rather than looking for different ways to communicate that make sense to the listener.

What makes this activity difficult is that you cannot use terms that only make sense to you. For instance, for someone from 500 years ago to understand wireless headphones requires the introduction of a number of metaphorical minefields that you will have to creatively navigate. The more you can develop such a skill, the more effectively you will be able to communicate with athletes that may not share your interests or domain-specific knowledge.

Activity 2: Hidden Camera

Suitable for: One person or a group

Overview

Relax, despite the name of this activity, I'm not suggesting you invade the privacy of your athletes or other coaches. Hidden Camera involves recording your coaching sessions in order to get feedback on everything from your non-verbal mannerisms to the tone or rate of your speech while coaching on the floor. It gives you the chance to look back at yourself at a moment in time with renewed clarity. You may be surprised at the difference between what you think you do and say when coaching, and what you *actually* do and say.

For maximal effectiveness, I suggest you record your sessions for at least a week. People modify their behavior when they're aware of being observed – this is known as the “Hawthorne Effect” – which means that recording for less than a week can give you a misleading sample.

Few, if any, of us like seeing ourselves on camera, but it can be an immensely valuable tool to show us what often goes unseen and help us correct simple mistakes.

Application

- 1) From an ethical and legal standpoint, before you do this activity, be sure to receive written permission from your athletes and any other staff who may appear in your recordings.
- 2) Position at least one video camera or cell phone with a view of your training area. If possible, use two or three cameras so you can capture recordings from multiple angles. (Setting up makeshift tripods, attaching chargers, and making sure you have enough storage space can be a pain, but trust me, it's worth it.)
- 3) At the start of each session every day for a week, press play, run your session as you normally would, then stop recording.
- 4) Review the recordings of your sessions. If you're doing this activity with your whole staff, each coach should have the opportunity to review all of the footage so that they not only see themselves but also learn from other coaches as well. Together, discuss the following questions (or write down your answers if you're doing this activity solo):
 - a) Did I turn my back to any athletes? If so, how could I have positioned myself more strategically so everyone remained in my view?
 - b) What was my tone of voice like?
 - c) How did my presence affect the room?
 - d) Did I make any athletes smile or laugh?
 - e) Did I smile or laugh at all?

- f) Did I engage in active demonstration?
 - g) Did I talk *at* my athletes or *to* them?
 - h) What kind of feedback did I give while they were training?
Did I only correct them if they made mistakes, or did I also reinforce correct behaviors?
 - i) How did I interact with other staff while coaching?
 - j) What was my posture like most of the time (e.g., arms crossed, arms behind my back, slouching)?
- 5) Based on your answers, determine where you can make improvements. Be sure to create an action plan so that you actually do something with the feedback as opposed to passively viewing it.
- 6) Decide if this is an activity you and/or all staff want to do monthly, quarterly, etc.

Helping Hand

Resist the urge to get defensive when watching yourself. I will be the first to admit that I absolutely *hate* seeing myself on camera. You have to get past this and see the recordings of your sessions for what they really are: feedback. Throughout your career you are going to hear many positive and negative things said about you regardless of what you do. Don't let the loudest and most negative voice of them all come from inside your own head. Keep it positive and focus on what you can do to improve, not what you did wrong.

Activity 3: Archetype Anarchy

Suitable for: A group

Overview

Chapter 3 of *Conscious Coaching* introduces 16 archetypes of athlete personalities. The archetypes represent common examples of behavior that you are likely to encounter and will have to adapt to throughout your

coaching career. None of these archetypes should be taken as an absolute, because most athletes will have characteristics of several archetypes. In other words, the key to using archetypes as a coaching tactic is to familiarize yourself with them, as opposed to rote memorizing them and trying to apply them rigidly. Study the archetypes, learn to think like them, and you will enhance your ability to coach the wide variety of athletes you will come across, each with their own agendas, ego, and insecurities.

In this exercise, participants play the roles of different archetypes and take part in a training session. Putting yourself in the shoes of different archetypes like this is a great way to better understand the athletes you coach and their communication styles. While the debate still rages about whether people have optimal learning styles, there's no question that there is a variety of communication styles, influenced by people's upbringing, exposure to various stimuli, and perception of their environment.

Application

- 1) Assign one person in the group the role of coach for the training session, and assign an archetype to each of the others in the group. You can assign a different archetype to each person, or give several people the same archetype, which is the more likely real-world scenario.
- 2) The "Coach" leads a 5–30 minute session as if they are taking a group of athletes or clients through a workout. The session can be an entire workout or just a component such as a warm-up, speed or agility session, weight-room session, etc.

During the session, each participant is to act according to the hallmark characteristics of their assigned archetype. For example, someone with The Wolverine archetype may display little or no sign of engagement, be unresponsive to small talk, and repeatedly isolate themselves from the group. Meanwhile, someone with The Leader archetype will diligently perform the assigned task and even rally those who aren't paying attention to get to work.

Note: You can make this as chaotic or controlled as you like. Yes, it is even OK to have some fun with it.

Helping Hand

Some staff may feel awkward doing this activity, which is fine. The key is to keep in mind that even though it represents an “elevated reality” of everyday coaching, the true value of the exercise is that it helps you get out of your own skin and stimulates discussion among you as a group.

Remember, it is not just athletes who fall into a spectrum of archetypes – coaches, co-workers, and administrators do as well. This means you can apply what you learn in this activity to more than just the training floor. Use the understanding you’ve gained for sharpening your job interview tactics, managerial skills, and even asking for a raise or promotion.

Activity 4: Establish Your Training Identity

Suitable for: A group

Overview

Before you can establish your training philosophy, you first need to understand yourself and establish your coaching identity. This is hard for most professionals in our field. Many coaches can get up on stage or talk to their peers for hours about their preferred training tactics, exercise progressions, and programming methodology. Yet they have trouble giving anything beyond a surface-level explanation of why they got into coaching, their weaknesses, the lessons they have learned through failure, or how they communicate as a leader or educator.

Sound bites such as “I do this to make a difference” or “I’m a lifelong learner, and the discipline of training provides stability” are not enough. When trying to create a culture of shared purpose with our athletes, we as coaches cannot authentically preach the importance of them knowing their “why” if we don’t look more deeply at or truly understand our own.

Yeah, yeah, sounds “fluffy” and trite, but there is a reason some of the top companies in the United States spend nearly \$110 billion per year on staff development, 60% of which is spent on tools such as interpersonal skills assessments. If you think there is no value in understanding your coaching identity better, or that you know something the leaders in those industries don’t, I would strongly urge you to reconsider.

This exercise requires you to go through the 3 Stages of Internal Identification (discussed in Chapter 2 of *Conscious Coaching*):

1) **Reflection – Questioning who you are**

Reflection means delving into your life history and recalling the moments that transformed you and made you the person you are today. Ask yourself reflective questions, such as: Why did you become a coach? Is it because you want to make a difference? Why? What experiences did you have that put you on this path? Or perhaps you want to be one of the best coaches so you can earn a great living and provide for you and your family?

2) **Inspection – Examining who you are**

In this stage you more closely examine the insights you uncovered during reflection. Look for the patterns that underlie the events of your past, and how they have influenced who you want to become. If reflection helps us to reconnect with who we really are, then inspection helps us connect with who we want to become, and the traits we want an ideal version of our future self to have.

3) **Progression – Owning who you are**

Once you have understood the roots of who you are (reflection) and who you want to become (inspection), in the final stage you think about the steps you must take to bridge the gap between who you are now and who you want to be in the future. What do you need to learn, and what behaviors do you need to change?

Application

- 1) Each staff member works through the 3 Stages of Internal Identification (see above). Here is a sample of questions to reflect on:
 - a) What events or influences in your life contributed to the development of your greatest strengths as a coach?
 - b) What specific events or influences in your life contributed to the development of your biggest weaknesses as a coach?
 - c) Who is the most personally and professionally fulfilled coach you have ever met?
 - d) Why is it so important to you to lead or help others?
 - e) What are your default communication strategies when trying to influence others? And why do you rely on those strategies in particular?
 - f) Do you seek to lead in every situation you find yourself in? If so, why?
 - g) What three things do you like most about yourself as a coach?
 - h) What three things do you like least about yourself as a coach?
 - i) How do you think your athletes perceive you as a communicator?
 - j) How do you think your athletes perceive you as a leader?
 - k) What do you think your colleagues, athletes, or closest friends would say is your greatest strength?
 - l) What do you think your colleagues, athletes, or closest friends would say is your greatest weakness?
 - m) What keeps you up at night?
 - n) How have you failed when dealing with conflict in the past?
 - o) What aspects of your current skillset do you have the hardest time letting go of and why?
 - p) What effect does pressure or fear have on you and the decisions you make as leader?
- 2) Each staff member creates a micro-presentation of 10 minutes or less covering all of the 3 Stages of Internal Identification

- (reflection, inspection, and progression) that shows the connections between their coaching identity and their training or leadership philosophy. This will be harder than you think.
- 3) In an open forum, have each member of staff share their presentation. The goal is for each of you to get a better understanding of what influences the ideas, tactics, beliefs, and communication styles of yourself and your co-workers.
 - 4) After listening to all the presentations, make one another defend your statements, just as you would defend your use of a certain exercise in your programming. Ask one another hard questions. The more you let one another get away with passive listening and agreeing by default, the less perspective and value you will gain from the activity.

Helping Hand

When making your presentation, worry less about complex visuals and graphics, and more about the richness and personal nature of your content. This activity is not meant to be a competition for who can create the “best” presentation, but rather the most introspective one. Older and younger coaches tend to have the most difficulty with this activity. Coaches who have been in the field for 25+ years or who have achieved a high status are often set in their ways, and younger coaches are often still wading through the waters of information overload and haven’t had enough time to fail or swallow their pride.

Activity 5: Personality Profiling

Suitable for: One person or a group

Overview

Your current athlete screening processes may include movement assessments, force/velocity profiling, medical questionnaires, speed and agility tests, and the like. But great coaching isn’t just about managing

the physical aspects of an athlete's training – it's also about managing the person and their environment as a whole. This exercise, in which you create a personality profile for your athletes, is a step toward achieving the 360-degree view you need.

This activity is not a psychometric evaluation or personality test of your athletes – it's about getting you to notice the low-hanging fruit that's right in front of your eyes. Over the course of the weeks, months or years that you work with them, you will track information about your athletes' backgrounds, communication styles, fears, goals, likes, and dislikes. This will help you gain better insight into your athletes, so that in turn you know how to get the best out of them.

Application

- 1) Create a spreadsheet in a program such as Google Sheets or Excel with columns including:
 - a) Full name
 - b) Nicknames
 - c) Date of birth
 - d) Hometown
 - e) Siblings or only child
 - f) Interests outside of sport (travel, golf, food, etc.)
 - g) Sports they played growing up
 - h) Favorite type of music
 - i) Favorite coach growing up and why
 - j) Who they look up to now and why
 - k) Whether they have kids of their own
 - l) Greatest adversity overcome
 - m) What they like most about their chosen sport
 - n) Why they compete
 - o) Favorite books
 - p) Favorite shows
 - q) Accomplishment they're most proud of

- 2) Group the columns in categories, just like you would have categories for data relating to strength/power testing, speed, agility, medical history, and load management. Only this time you will be looking at categories such as generational, geographical, family, hobbies/interests, drives, fears/accomplishments, communication style, etc.
- 3) Over time, ask your athletes questions to find out this information. Ask them in a natural way, not as an interrogation or by firing a list of questions at them as though you're checking items off a list. It is not just your athletes' answers that are important, but also the way you establish a dialogue with your athletes.
- 4) After coaching sessions, add new details to your spreadsheet.
- 5) Review and update your spreadsheet weekly.
- 6) Make this information available to all staff so that you can all learn more about the athletes under your care, and collectively update your spreadsheet.
- 7) The data listed above are a great starting point. Once you know the basics, you can add other information to your spreadsheet to deepen your insights into your athletes.
- 8) Consider how this type of investigative mindset can be instilled in your staff culture over the long term.

Helping Hand

Your spreadsheet doesn't have to be anything fancy. It's the information about your athletes that's important, not the "artwork." Over time, the way you track, categorize, and share the information will evolve. Let the questions you ask evolve, too.

You may believe that all these details should come up in ordinary conversation or that you shouldn't have to write this stuff down given that you interact with your athletes nearly every day. Well, even though you see your athletes nearly every day, I bet you still keep track of new information about how they performed, their body weight or hydration level before and after training, and how well they ate or slept the night

before. My point? Don't let what you *think* you intuitively know interfere with useful information you might be overlooking. Knowing more about your athletes as people can help you make better decisions.

Because you are human, you will inevitably find yourself making snap judgements based on the information you gather about your athletes. Therefore, you must train yourself to see the bigger picture, rather than be swayed by one or two pieces of data. Focus on trends or relationships across the spectrum of data you collect about an athlete, as opposed to isolated facts. You need to learn to think like a detective, as every “clue” is just one piece of the whole puzzle.

Lastly, avoid the “I have too many athletes and not enough time” excuse. If you have time to coach, you have time to ask questions and get to know your athletes. This is an ongoing process – a marathon, not a sprint. You cannot lead effectively if you don't look deeper than the surface level of those under your care.

Activity 6: Bright Spots

Suitable for: One person or a group

Overview

When people face a situation that's less than ideal, they tend to focus on the negative, rather than identifying their strategic advantages, or “bright spots.” There was no better poster child for this bad tendency than me when I first began coaching. No matter where I was working, I noticed all the problems in the organization and daydreamed about the day I would take over, when I would fix it all by coming in “guns blazing” and flipping everything 180 degrees.

Man would I have failed miserably. No matter how bad a situation is, there's usually a number of things that are going well, and maximizing existing bright spots is far more effective and efficient in the long run than trying to implement new solutions that usually require lengthy

explanations or radical behavior change. That is because big problems are rarely solved with big solutions. Instead, it is small, consistent steps that move things forward gradually.

This activity enables you to develop problem-solving skills so that no matter where you coach, you will be able to make the most of the bright spots. It's especially helpful for younger coaches who will likely take leadership positions in the future and find themselves having to initiate changes and make tough decisions.

Application

- 1) Write down a list of ten clear advantages, or native solutions, that currently make your job easier or your operations a bit more seamless. Think broadly here. Include big advantages, such as administrative support, the amount of open space you have access to, young or open-minded athletes, a flexible budget, and tremendous intern support. Also include everyday things or advantages you may take for granted. Examples could be access to a commercial printer, staff who have a deep understanding of the local community or culture, a talented local handyman, or access to a strong WiFi signal.
- 2) Decide which three of the advantages you would be least willing to part with, and write down why.
- 3) For each of the top three advantages you picked, write down answers to the following questions:
 - a) If I went somewhere else to coach and I didn't have access to this advantage, what other resource would I turn to next in order to replicate its effect?
 - b) How would I know I succeeded in replicating that effect?
 - c) How can I scale this effect now so that in the future my organization will be resilient (even if I leave to work somewhere else)?

Helping Hand

When you compile your list, try to write down first the things you usually wouldn't think about. For instance, I never considered the importance of a commercial printer or good WiFi signal until I took a job where I had neither. Instead of focusing on writing programs, staff development, and making sure the weight room was in order, I often found myself wasting time trying to troubleshoot router issues or holding myself back from smashing our wireless printer. This was time that I will never get back, but I learned a lesson that I'd never trade: I developed the habit of finding "bright spot" solutions (in that case, using offline versions of Google Docs).

If problems arise in your current coaching environment, use what you've learned during this activity. Tap into the resources you have on hand before trying to change anything.

Activity 7: Disclosure Based Mentoring

Suitable for: A pair or a group

Overview

As our field grows, so does the number of pretenders promoting false information and quick fixes. As a result, more than ever before, aspiring coaches are looking for advice from those with more experience whom they can trust and relate to. In this activity, you will conduct a mentoring session, helping a younger coach by sharing the mistakes and failures you made early in your coaching career, and how you overcame and learned from them.

This activity requires transparency on your part. Being open about your failures provides your mentee with real-world examples that they can learn from and use immediately in their own career. An article about a training program would teach your mentee about methods, and an autobiography of a great leader could give them ideas about how others have shaped their

careers, but a real-time conversation with you can convert your personal story into practical application faster for your mentee than any other medium.

Apply

Meet with an aspiring coach either in person or on a video call, and share 5–10 failures or mistakes you made early in your career. You could also do this in a group setting, having senior staff members share their experiences with newer staff. (If you are stuck coming up with failures or mistakes, the “Trust Tenets” in Chapter 4 of *Conscious Coaching* can serve as a good guide to common mistakes that coaches make either through ego, bias, or inexperience.)

Discuss what led to the mistakes or failures, and how you learned to correct them going forward.

Ask your mentee to send you a follow-up email about what they learned from each mistake or failure you shared, and what they will do to avoid making the same errors in their career.

Helping Hand

Your time is valuable, so I know there will be a temptation to skip over this activity because it requires a bit of outreach and coordination of schedules. Just remember, despite our field’s ongoing obsession with discovering the best exercise or method to achieve a certain outcome, information is now a simple Google search away. Instead, today’s younger practitioners need more practical knowledge related to the art of coaching from someone they can relate to who has actually spent time on the floor leading and managing diverse groups. You cannot call yourself a leader in any field if you do not take the time to mentor others and pass along your knowledge and experiences.

Activity 8: Ten Strangers

Suitable for: One person or a group

Overview

Whether you consider yourself an introvert, extrovert, or ambivert, if you want to coach, you are going to need to learn how to start and hold a conversation or twenty. Athletes and fellow practitioners will come to you for advice and guidance. Odds are that you will encounter many people with whom you share common ground but you'll also have to interact with those whose upbringing or life experiences are vastly different to yours.

Some would say that knowing how to converse with people from different backgrounds should just be common sense. Yes, but remember that it also used to be considered common sense that the world was flat. Learning the art of conversation will pave the way to improved relationships, teaching methods, and perhaps even career opportunities.

The Ten Strangers activity challenges you to develop your conversation skills through talking to – you guessed it – ten strangers. I've been assigning this activity to interns since 2011 and I continue to practice it myself. You'll be surprised at your sticking points as you begin to choose more challenging settings or situations for your conversations.

Apply

- 1) You (and every member of your staff if you're doing this as a group) must start conversations with ten strangers throughout the course of one week. These conversations must take place *in person* (not on the phone or on the internet) and outside of your immediate work environment. The conversations also have to be with people outside of your personal or professional network.

- 2) The conversation itself is the goal. Strive to keep it going for at least 5–10 minutes. You can even compete with other members of your staff about how long you can keep these conversations going. Again, the process of having the conversation is the only desired outcome.
- 3) Afterwards, write down the key aspects of the conversation, such as:
 - a) Where did you meet the stranger(s)?
 - b) How did you start the conversation?
 - c) Why did you choose them?
 - d) How did they react to you coming up to them?
 - e) How did you adapt your communication style over the course of the conversation (tone of voice, the type of questions you asked, body language, etc.)?
 - f) What did you do to disarm them if they seemed nervous or reticent?
 - g) What was their full name?
 - h) Where did you struggle?

Helping Hand

One of the best pieces of communication advice I ever received was: “To be considered interesting, you must first be interested.” One of the best ways to keep a conversation going and to make others feel more comfortable is to keep the focus on them. Quit trying to think of things to say. Let the conversation flow and actually listen to the other person.

* * *

This field guide is just a preview of something big I’m working on to further the ideas in *Conscious Coaching* and help coaches turn buy-in into action. Now you’re signed up, stay tuned for more on the way shortly.

REFERENCES

- Athlete perceptions of intra-group conflict in sport teams, Kyle F. Paradis – Academia.edu. (n.d.). Retrieved from: http://www.academia.edu/8242412/Athlete_perceptions_of_intra-group_conflict_in_sport_teams.
- Bartholomew, B. (2016). *Conscious Coaching: The Art and Science of Building Buy-In*. CreateSpace.
- Bechara, A. (1997). Deciding Advantageously Before Knowing the Advantageous Strategy. *Science*, 275(5304), 1293-1295. doi:10.1126/science.275.5304.1293.
- Bowes, I., & Jones, R. L. (2006). Working at the Edge of Chaos: Understanding Coaching as a Complex, Interpersonal System. *The Sport Psychologist*, 20(2), 235-245. doi:10.1123/tsp.20.2.235.
- Cruickshank, A., & Collins, D. (2014). Illuminating and Applying “The Dark Side”: Insights From Elite Team Leaders. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 27(3), 249-267. doi:10.1080/10413200.2014.982771.
- Judge, T. A., Piccolo, R. F., & Kosalka, T. (2009). The bright and dark sides of leader traits: A review and theoretical extension of the leader trait paradigm. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20(6), 855-875. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2009.09.004.
- Ludlam, K. E., Bawden, M., Butt, J., Lindsay, P., & Maynard, I. W. (2016). Perceptions of Engaging With a Super-Strengths Approach in Elite Sport. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 29(3), 251-269. doi:10.1080/10413200.2016.1255278.
- Story, A. L. (1998). Self-Esteem and Memory for Favorable and Unfavorable Personality Feedback. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24(1), 51-64. doi:10.1177/0146167298241004.
- Wachsmuth, S., Jowett, S., & Harwood, C. G. (2016). Conflict among athletes and their coaches: what is the theory and research so far? *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 10(1), 84-107. doi:10.1080/1750984x.2016.1184698.